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SECRET AND POWER IN SOCIAL LIFE

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Abstract

Secret and power constitute two fundamental instances of the social world. Secret takes care of the concealment of things and of social processes. Secret is also a power device. Power is the social capacity to do, create, not doing and stop from doing. Secret and power get mutual feedback. Power uses the secret to protect his potential, be it what may, to increment its operative strength. Secret uses the power to achieve its aims and proposals. Social sciences seem to ignore the huge explanatory capacity of these two interrelated concepts, and even more, their powerful intervention in societies.

Key words: society – politic – secret - power

Introduction

Secret and power are indissolubly one. Both concepts seem to be mutually dependent, engaged in a sort of non-stop feedback. Secret is always a power device. It can be both defensive and offensive power depending on the different cases. The inscrutability of secret always gives the chance of protection, survival and, if necessary, even attack. In dangerous situations, secretiveness favors the subject, the social being and the action, withdrawing and coming up at the right moment. However, in favorable situations, concealment allows for readjustments and arrangements that exposition prevents.

Power resorts to secret for both enlarging its operational capacity and protecting its potential- whichever it may be. Secret conceals vital parts of that power whose unveiling could be dangerous. Power manages through secret to find its place even in those environments adverse to its exercise. From there, secretly hidden, it can choose the interventions it will perform upon facts, events, and scientific, political, cultural and social processes.

Power and secret stand as solid operational strategies for both pursuers and pursued ones, authoritarians and anarchists, invaders and fighting back resisting ones.

The secret is the *no* of the exposition. You should have power to say “no”: the *no* power. Then, you should have power not only to do and to say, but you should also have power for not doing and not saying; much more power when it comes to doing *no* and saying *no* or doing from the shadows. It’s all about the power to conceal without being discovered, the power to operate from remote places. Secret is based on the power of no exposition. An old Chinese proverb both suggests that you are master of your silence and slave of your words and that you must have power so as not to be obliged to say. Besides, it claims that by hiding what the explicit would reveal, silence protects and strengthens the power to keep quite and consequently, the power to say, if it were necessary.

Then, we can say that power is both suitable for the attack and the defense. From the darkness, silence is experienced in two planes: a) - in terms of the developments within the very secret and b)- by signaling exposition areas and problems with the accuracy granted by the world of the secret. The “others” –exposed- targets of secret interventions are still more exposed since they ignore who considers them and under which perspective.

Secret favors invulnerability or at least hinders the exposition of vulnerable areas. A secret organization, strategy or action, when it can work this way, -with all the difficulties it implies- is able to observe and estimate from a sort of “nowhere” position what its opponent does, its strong and weak points. Consequently, they can better plan when and where to appear, scare, threaten and hit, though the intervention may avoid or exercise violence.

Secret is associated to a vulnerability decrease and to an increase of the self-protection and safety circle. The latter idea explains why secret is highly used for both specifically secret practices as well as for surface and exposition ones. Sometimes a great impact on the exposed world is the result of effort and hard work in the hidden world. Likewise, an important part of the decision taking process is performed and planned in invisible, hidden and discreet territories since it can ensure this way its effectiveness and protective self-safety.

The value of the secret

The value of the secret lies in its capacity to hide something. At the same time, that “something” is considered valuable since it must be protected from other people’s eyes.

The secret either shared or not, calls for a concealment of the exposition. Concealment is both an action and a strategy with at least one aim: the masking of “that” which must not come to light. Sometimes it is so in order to produce things, effects and results, some other times because its revelation would represent a threat to its creator.

There are two kinds of secrets: the secrets that are known to be secrets and those that are unknown since we ignore their existence. The latter may not be discovered and would therefore remain as non-existent though they actually existed. It may also be the case that they emerge, at least as secrets, at some moment in the course of their history causing the consequent surprise of those who ignored them. For instance, we can think of the secret letters of some literary or historical character that came to light due to a break in the concealment chain. There are also State secrets that are known to be secrets and State activities, public and private, which are ignored due to its inscrutability.

Derrida is concerned about the secret. He associates it with democracy and freedom. In his book *Deconstrucción y Pragmatismo*¹ he suggests that the secret must not be pursued in all its aspects and manifestations. Instead, it represents equilibrium between both saying and exposing since nobody can impose what to say and what not to say, except when this affects others' life. Derrida relates the secret with individual experience. At the same time, he mistrusts those democratic conceptions that stigmatize secret and want to proscribe it from democratic practices.

This author makes a critical reading of Koiré's theory of secret, which considers it a threat to democracy. If everything must be public, Derrida wonders where does the right to secret as part of freedom lie? Koiré's position is based on an “integral politics” that hides a totalitarian root that pretends to be democratic, as A. Spire points out in a interview with the French philosopher. Derrida believes that the man is a citizen from head to toe and this implies the right to secret under certain circumstances. On the one hand, we cannot ask the world to say everything all the time and, on the other hand, we cannot ignore that there are several unacceptable secret practices that conspire against democracy. The latter explains why secret is heterogeneous and inaccessible to public domain. Such heterogeneity, far from being a form of depoliticization it is rather a condition for the politicization of the issue about the genealogical, historical and political dimensions of that concept.

¹ Derrida, J. *Deconstrucción y pragmatismo*, Paidós, Buenos Aires, 1998, pp. 151-169.

The value of power

Politics is the discovery and the exercise of power. Actually, politics is the art, science and technique of creating and using power over different groups of social relations. In this way, politics becomes a complex power relation framework over all the social units of any existent community. In a restricted sense, politics is in charge of the struggles and the organizational aspects of the state sphere (from the global to the local). In a broader sense, politics intervenes in all social life orders since it originates the power relations of the familiar, educational, ecclesiastical, syndical, economic, military and state units.

Power is a highly complex, enigmatic and paradoxical social entity. Power is complex since it is formed out of different elements including all the possible activities of society. Power is enigmatic since it hides more than it shows, it ignores more than it discovers and it conceals more than it offers. Besides, power blends into the most sophisticated forms of *no power*, such as for example, unselfish love and generous education, aseptic scientific knowledge and altruist sacrifice. Moreover, power disguises itself under *no power* in all manipulation manifestations as well as in the concealment of unmentionable purposes, means and interests.

Power is as paradoxical as any social process. It is done and undone at the same time. Power is the result of social actors who are simultaneously subordinated to it. Power is the social construction of active actors and, at the same time, power actively contributes to their formation. This circular mechanism goes hand in hand with another paradox. Power is intense and unstable; powerful and ethereal; booming and fragile; organized and random. Thus, power displays a tendency towards expansion, reproduction and growth, while it shows unequivocal signs of random dispersion, dismantling and reduction.

Furthermore, power shows its complex multiplicity through the proliferation of its functions. In other words, power develops the functions of *achievement* (both construction and destruction of results), *promotion* and *subordination*. Both unilateral and reductionist conceptions have assigned power only the latter function: being a subordinating agent. However, power relations and structures clearly show the wide variety of functions power fulfills. It subordinates as much as it promotes. As it subordinates and promotes, it achieves. Then, the predominance of one or other function will depend upon the class and kind of power used, the field where it is exercised and the aims pursued.

Power in its stable-unstable complexity presents a multiplicity of interrelated elements whose structures, strong nodules and vanishing points account for its potential and fragility. We have selected some of the main elements of this social framework such as: *Ideas and Beliefs, Leadership-conduction, Population-collectivities, Space, Resources and Technologies, Time, State and Organization*. These elements may be present or absent, go in or out, grow or worsen, assemble or split up. Nothing ties anything forever.

Then power is consolidated, constructed and dispersed according to the ruling coordination and dissipation conditions. Thus, power can be the noble tool of the creator and the evil tool of the tyrant. It is involved in justice, freedom and emancipation struggles as well as in the destructive and dominant tortuous mechanism of fanatics and authoritarians.

The concept of secret

Secret is something hidden and something we hide. It is what we place “behind” visible things or what has in itself a specifically invisible existence. Then, secret means deliberate invisibility.

Secret is like the double life of things. On the one side, you have exposition; on the other, you have concealment. Actually, it seems nothing works without secret. It is like an unavoidable part of life. Therefore, part of daily life takes place in secret and, in some circumstances, in the most private secret. Then, secret is undoubtedly enigmatic since we do not know quite well what it is or what it is about. Besides, secret is in many ways seductive and intriguing, a challenge and an invitation to discovery. It is also threatening as it is surrounded by a sort of dangerousness whereby the hidden implies a deliberate attitude or posture to avoid being spotted, to dodge inquiries or escape from indiscreet questions. All this creates a vicious circle of constant feedback where the seductive, enigmatic and dangerous aspects of power continually attract and reject each other.

Relationships between mates, sexual relations, couples, families, different types of associations, institutions, educational, religious, military, syndical, business, economic and political organizations, all of them have some secret area. It is what does not transcend, either because some activities naturally fall outside public domain or because there are deliberate efforts for this to be so. Exposition is the enemy of secret. Then, the strategies of exposition and those of secret are in constant opposition to one another and it all depends upon the disposition of each other forces.

Secret is not necessarily wrong and it does not necessarily imply the dark and impure side of ethics and morality. Sometimes it is the other way round, since it all depends on who is on each side. Sometimes, secret protects the weak, the excluded, the poor, the revolutionary, the savior, the just and those that want to fight corruption, privilege, violence and extermination. Then there are good and bad secrets, but it all depend on ethic codes.

From what has been said so far, we can conclude that there are secret aspects in almost all instances of social life and that many of them are actually characterized by those hidden aspects. However, this is something extremely difficult to notice since the very nature of secret lies in the idea of not revealing itself, finding concealment under thousands of masks and disguises. Social life uses and customs have a secret plane, which does not necessarily coincide with what we see: law, discourse or non-discoursal practices. It is even quite likely that changes and modifications occur first in secret, before possible sanctions, so they can get ready to come to light.

On the one hand, secret represents the most private world of the members of a society. Each society and culture has its own more or less precise definitions of what they call "private life". But the latter, either in a restricted or broader sense, has got a private nucleus that constitutes one of the most valuable resources of human beings. It is what lets them be themselves, an essence they shall preserve from the scrutiny of others - even when they are loved ones- since it is the last reservoir of the self. This secret allows you to safeguard your most intimate needs and desires, especially those condemned and rejected by current societies. Here live the most intimate and inappropriate feelings; even those that make their bearers feel sinful, anxious and shameful.

On the other hand, apart from the secret aspects of all life activities, there are specific institutions of the secret: "secret organizations". Such organizations make of the secret their cornerstone; they live in secret and develop technologies of the secret suitable to generate power. They work under a single principle: the secret not only wants to be secret but it also *must* be secret since that is the actual reason and condition of its existence, without it such organizations would simply and unavoidably disappear. These clandestine and semi-clandestine organizations belong both to the official spheres and the unofficial ones or those that fight against current legitimacies.

Secret and daily life

The social framework of daily life is often pervaded with secret. Within this social framework, it is possible to find different levels of concealment and exposition that result from various circumstances. Here secret does not always mean the concealment of humiliating and disgraceful behaviors. Sometimes, secret is a sign of trust between friends, mates, lovers, family members, etc. It stands as the safeguarding of something that is highly treasured and that we want to keep out of the world's sight, not so for its questionable character but rather for its valuable and private meaning. Thus, secret violation is taken as a fault and an offense on the part of the one who was supposed to keep it. Then, certain aspects of daily life are not based on concealment but rather on safeguarding and mutual trust. Keeping a secret is both a must and virtue. Many times, a secret may also protect a fault, a fall or a break-up of what is expected and appreciated. In these cases, secrets seem to protect people and relations that want to give themselves a new opportunity without damaging their image. In other words, the secrets of daily life may have some degree of innocence and good intentions that go beyond the scope of the present paper. Moreover, secrets between professionals and their clients seem to be quite close to this trust and protection search. For example, we can think of secrets shared by physicians, psychiatrists and psychologists and their corresponding patients; lawyers and clients; journalists and informants, etc.

In an intermediate position we find confession, legal or religious, public or private. Confession participates in the secret it reveals, in the one that the confessor can keep and in the secret that often protects the confessor, according to the ruling norms. Religious confession, in particular, is a paradoxical and strange sign of secret and revelation wiles as well as the social and personal strength it implies.

In confinement institutions such as prisons, mental hospitals, and minor offenders institutes different secret circuits are created whereby protection, delation, violence and the harshest and even the most sinister power relations intersect. Those institutions also work in a social scale as an especial instance of secret that isolates its inmates in a sort of shameful state before a society that prefers not to know, which chooses to ignore. Here lies the duplicity of the secret since from both confinement and freedom it is prone to simultaneously elude light or boost a guilty though reassuring semi-darkness.

Likewise, there is a layer of secret over poverty and social exclusion that protects them from the eyes of the remaining society. Here secrets seek to neglect guilts and

remorses hiding disgraceful areas by keeping them out of public sight. If poverty turns into a stigma, it is likely that the stigmatized would like to hide themselves while the others would like to free themselves from such cruel and shameful exposition. At the same time, the poor and the excluded develop new forms of secrets to protect themselves, and, in certain cases, even attack. As there are closed neighborhoods that serve as housing and resting spaces for high class social groups, therefore keeping social climbers and criminals at bay, there are also misery and poverty closed neighborhoods that make those that do not belong feel intruders and enemies. Those are places that try to “get out” of the system by practicing social exclusion from the “inside”. They cultivate secret as a form of defense against different life styles. Such poverty fortresses are only accessible to strangers by exerting violence against the repressive forces or by humbly asking for either “permission” or “safeconduct” to its leaders. Without disregarding the fact that such neighborhoods can shelter criminal life styles, they can also offer another example of secret protection forms.

In the novel *The name of the rose* Umberto Eco makes the protagonist monk play a detective role -among others. There are secrets in the religious symbols and in the liturgical rites. The plot goes along a winding path full of labyrinths and false clues that harbor what it is intended to be concealed. In the stories “The garden of forking paths” and “The sect of the Phoenix” Borges points out the importance of secret, an issue he resorts to in many of his texts. He says: “the secret is sacred, but also somewhat ridiculous. The practice of the mystery is furtive and even clandestine, and its adepts do not speak about it”.² The idea of secret also appears in the police intrigues he plotted with Bioy Caseres and in the creation of the famous series called “7th circle” which discovered both great and unknown authors of the genre. Police investigations implied deliberate concealment resulting from human activity. Such concealment created an exciting plot that used to go beyond what was ignored for its complexity. It created a desire to unveil and to dismantle a parallel reality deliberately hatched by a criminal mind. Here it is not just a question of the wrong piece of information that deviates you from the path that leads to the truth, typical of science practice; it is a different thing, something else. It is rather a clue sowed to confuse, distract and take you to a blind alley. It is all about a stratagem to deceive and a trap to ambush the reader. Conan Doyle created a character, Sherlock Holmes, who was a total revolution for the detective literary genre due to his use of logic for dismantling prefabricated secrets. However, this aspect did not reach social sciences maybe because

² Borges, J. L. *Ficciones*, en *Obras Completas*, Emece, Buenos Aires, 1997, p. 523.

they are not supposed to discover criminals or punish them. The aforementioned sciences should only be concerned about facts, processes, tendencies and laws. What was and is still unnoticed is the fact that powerful secret strategies are taking part in the construction of those facts, processes, tendencies and laws.

If scientific social investigations have their origins in police inquiries with its corresponding searches for clues, motives and hidings, it is rather strange why secret has been excluded from their practices and procedure handbooks. Techniques and methods have been improved and adopted for judicial and criminal investigations but the ingredient of the secret remained paradoxically secret.

Secrets in the city, the Golem and the sculpture

City

There are those who believe that cities -as places where people establish relationships with nature and its possible constructions- have more than one name. Furthermore, they would suggest that the secret name is the most important one since it would reveal some gifts that ordinary names ignore. Murena³, among others, says that in certain historical periods such as Antiquity, a big city had three names. Those names were imposed in the foundation ceremony. Such rituals were performed in Europe as well as in China, India, America and Africa. The same happened with Rome. Rome was the public name, the one presented to its citizens. It also had a priestly or religious name, which was Flor or Florens due to the foundation date coincidence with Floralia festivities. According to some commentators and historians, this city had a third name that was secret. There are some certainties to uphold this idea since Plinio in his *Natural History* affirms that a magistrate was executed when he tried to reveal the name. A Byzantine historian called Lydas said that this name was *amor* ("love" in Spanish) the anagram of *Roma* ("Rome" in Spanish).

Why are there three names? Which is the sense of that? The public name corresponds to the kingdom of usefulness; it is the name for profane use. The priestly name represents the esoteric aspect of religion in its open and ecclesiastic dimension. The secret name, however, is the reason of the other two. It expresses the esoteric mystic root of the religious aspect and the anagrammatic construction of the public one.

The secret name creates the essential bond that ties the city to its inhabitants. It establishes a form of honest habitability between a city and a class of spirit men. The

³ Murena, H.A. *El nombre secreto*, Monte Ávila Editores, Caracas, 1969.

secret name is the symbol of the marriage between earth and heaven mediated by men. It represents the idea of coexistence possessed and communicated. It is not a value of use but a “uselessness” or the supreme usefulness. Thus, it is both the strongest and the most vulnerable name, whose secret works as protection.⁴ Those spirit men take away from God both the name and the altruist disposition to help them as long as they keep the human and divine bond with the earth numens.

Golem

The legend of the Golem poses the possibility of bringing to life an inert unskilled mud creature. Among the so many versions that deal with the topic, one claims that a Jude Rabbi, in Prague, created a project man with the mud of Moldova's riverbank. He brought it to life by placing inside his mouth a parchment with the secret and sacred name of God. He claims that the name of God is unknown to men since the Lord does not want to communicate it to his creatures. He also claims that -and this is one of cabbala's pursuits- if we manage to discover in the sacred books, (and consequently in its letters), the possible combinations to find the name of God, it would let us establish a relationship with His talents.

Borges in his poem “Golem” suggests that like the Greek says in the Cratilo (Plato), “the name is the archetype of the thing” and thus, if we found the combined letters that make up the secret name of God, we would establish a binding and reciprocal line with the Almighty talents.

Art and secret

Rodin made a sculpture, which he called “The secret”. The theme is represented by two interweaved hands, hiding something unknown and invisible between them. The symbol is extremely shrewd as it expresses that which shall be concealed. The sculptor also includes a mystery and a surprise ingredient since both hands spark off a strange feeling in their embrace. What happens is that both are right hands. This means that the secret does not belong exclusively to one person, but rather it is shared by all those represented by the “other hand”, whichever it is. The interweaving of two right hands opens an endless scope of interpretations and deprives the secret of the illusion of being something purely individual. The secret belongs to one or other, whoever they might be.

⁴ Idem.

Bianchi Villeli and Georgieff understand that the masterpiece represents a trio, since the two hands -each from different people- seem to keep the secret of somebody else. Here is where the game of psychoanalytic interpretations starts and develops. According to the aforementioned authors: “the secret presupposes some hidden information between two...about a third party”.⁵

Freud and the Secret Committee

The activities and organizations that contributed to the creation and consolidation of the discipline called Psychoanalysis are maybe a paradigmatic example of the utilization of secret power strategies outside the social, state and –specifically- political level. At the beginning of the XXth Century, or at least during the first two decades, Freud and his followers took upon their shoulders a double responsibility: 1) to open the path for the discipline development and, 2) to confront both outside and inside dissidents. The strangest thing was that the hardest struggle to impose a psychoanalytic discipline was motivated by internal clashes rather than by external ones. At least, we can assure that secret strategies lead psychoanalysts’ activities, under Freud leadership, with the aim of protecting and keeping alive an orthodoxy threatened by Jung, Adler and some of their followers’ rejections, criticisms and doubts.

The truth is that the discipline was just in its early stages and it constituted a field of personal and conceptual forces. It was necessary to defend proposals and to attack rival and differing orientations. It also included the criticism and the opposition representatives’ expulsion. This discipline was born and grew within huge clarifying efforts to reach a new understanding of the psychic world as opposed to psychiatric and psychological traditions. Its origins were also part of a silent struggle to impose one or other practical and intellectual direction. Power secret strategies are built here since we notice the value of concealment before any frank though vulnerable exposition.

If we reconstruct the history of psychoanalysis by means of testimonial texts, letters and the biographies of its most distinguished exponents, we would be able to notice the careful and useful attempts to make one power group, interpretative line or a field domain prevail while expulsing dissidents. In the present paper we have considered

⁵ Bianchi Villeli, H; A, Georgieff. *El secreto ¿escisión o integración?*, Rev. de Psic., T. XXXVII, 6.

Martínez Filomeo's⁶ contribution to the topic that was highly supported by documentary material. Let's see his most interesting points. Actions always take place in a duplicity field: a visible and exposed plane where controversies and proposals come to light before the world's eyes and a hidden invisible plane where aims, objectives and opposing sides were better established. At this point it is where both the combative and conspiring spirits meet, the group spirit. Here we outline the plans to move forward, to prevail and to defeat the enemy. Here we develop concealment and silence techniques to make the intervention more effective and to hide an image that would damage actors' prestige and followers' trust.

In this disciplinary birth, the world of secrets is a world preferentially of astuteness, stratagems, traps and strokes given in and from the shadows. The secret makes power stronger since it takes its vulnerability away and allows it to attack the other where it hurts most, with maximum resources and minimum exposition. The secret overcomes defences prepared for the visible and exposed. And, to cap it all, it allows it to get rid of prejudices as well as of coexistence and tolerance rules demanded in any legitimate dispute, because what is not seen is not offered to moral criticism and its limits. Freud and his cortege turn out to be good strategists for their arduous, tenacious, audacious and – sometimes – rather pitiless temperaments.

The battle for the control of the field for the psychoanalysis constitution lies in a fundamental rivalry: the Freudian line or the Jungian line. The former has its foundations in the pulsional duality and the theory of the libido. The latter, monist, is based on the acknowledgement of a unique and general energy, lacking the predominant sexual character of its rival.

Freud turns out to be an active militant of secret and power. First, he applies a persuasion strategy to his friend/enemy (and disciple) Jung, who presides the IPA, the famous International Psychoanalytic Association. The main reason is Jung's rejection to the theory of the libido. Freud writes to him: "...and don't move away from me too much when you are actually so close, because if you do, perhaps one day that can confront us"⁷. Actually, Freud and his followers face a complex strategy in both planes - the exposed and the secret -, and they even do it with interesting subversive variants: the secret committee. These strategies simultaneously comprise four levels that will be expressed in researches and activities. Let's take a look at this:

⁶ Martínez Filomeno, A. *Freud y Ginzburg, método indiciario y diversidad de interpretaciones*, Tesis de Maestría, Universidad Nacional de La Matanza, 2004.

⁷ Donn, J. *Freud y Jung los años de amistad los años perdidos*, J. Vergara edit., Buenos Aires, 1990, p.210.

- a) Theoretical level: *Introduction to Narcissism*.
- b) Clinical level: The history of "the men of the wolves", in the *History of infantile neurosis*.
- c) Historical level: *Contribution to the History of the psychoanalytic movement*.
- d) Political level: foundation of the Secret Committee.

Undoubtedly, items d) and c) are the closest ones to the power and secret strategies employed by Freudianism. The author ascribes the character of "bomb" to the "*Contribution...*" and highlights the effects that it will produce on his opponents. In the correspondence carried on with Abraham he says: "therefore, the bomb exploded and soon we will know its effects, that is to say that we will have to give the victims two or three weeks to let themselves regroup".⁸

In the political level d), the Secret Committee is already a power strategy in pure state. The Committee has six members. They are: Jones (President), Ferenczi, Abraham, Sachs, Rank and, afterwards, Eitingon. This Committee has a manifest function (a real stratagem): to form a Freud's helpers group for the daily issues of discussing the psychoanalytic literature, the papers for the Annual Book and therefore, leave the master with enough free time for his creative production. The main function is concealed and it consists on defending orthodox psychoanalysis against the heterical deviations and attacking his representatives. This means excluding Jung, Adler and others from the psychoanalytic field and leave them out from institutional places. In a letter addressed to Freud, Jones himself clearly exposes the character and purposes of the Committee he presides: "My idea is to form an unofficial and informal Council, therefore necessarily secret, in close contact with you, with your instruction and criticism. What we will need to do is to purify all the theoretical ecrescences".⁹ Jung observes with astonishment and fear, how he is both excluded from the decision taking process and deprived from information while, at the same time, he witnesses how a parallel power starts to be created. It calls the attention the contemptuous sense used to characterize distinguished colleagues, the use of militar and bellicose terms and language to refer to the rivals actions, and the stratagems employed to purify the disciplinary environment of people tagged as undesirable and dangerous.

Again, in a letter to Abraham, Freud says: "...we've finally got rid of the brutal sanctimonious that Jung is and of his repeating parrots".¹⁰ In 1912 Ferenczi answers Freud in this terms: "I offer you my most sincere approval for the energetic expulsion of

⁸ Freud, S.; K, Abraham. *Correspondencia*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1979, p.209

⁹ Donn, J. *Freud y Jung...* Op. cit., p.100.

¹⁰ Freud, S.; Abraham. Op. cit. pp. 212/213.

Stekel. A reduced troop, but more trustworthy, will be much more productive than a great group of idiots and inconsiderate selfish men. The times of firm hand will expulse the fastidious and will motivate the convinced ones”¹¹

Also in 1912 Freud tells Ferenczi: “So we are initiating hostilities”.¹²

The story is more extensive and it presents all the necessary elements to form a powerful secret strategy of disciplinary-scientific power. It must be made clear that: the history of disciplines, organizations, institutions and political, social and cultural systems offer innumerable examples of this kind. Sometimes it is surprising to see the best minds also focused on aims and methods that would alarm spirits even such as that of Maquiavelo in his “Discourses upon the first decade of Tito Livio”. The concept “disciplinary field” understood as a space of power struggles to gain a certain cultural capital in dispute, supported by P. Bourdieu, finds in these examples interesting confirmations.

Anyway, this intrigues do not cloud the imponent knowledge strategies that create renown cultural and scientific disciplinary spaces. Very often, strange confluences between antagonic and, at the same time, complementary strategies seem to be established. One problem to be taken into account would be, making a mental experiment in the Einstein fashion, to think what development strategies different disciplines would have reached since their origin, considering the triumph of the rival’s power strategies.

Politics, State and secret

Politic life acts in the light, in the darkness and in that grey zone where they both converge. A great part of the most important decision-taking elapses in secret and semisecret. Politics, specially state politics, permanently utilizes the strategies of secret. They are suitable for protecting as well as for attacking; for reaching an agreement and for fighting; they are good both for reaching a consensus and for confronting; for competing and for influencing. The politic organizations –opposing and governmental-, the governments, the parliaments and the diverse kinds of institutions that form the politic field, develop intense secret activities, most of them more important than the ones that are brought to light. The relationships based on agreements, alliances, separations and confrontations in the very force lines as well as between rivals, opponents and enemies, most of the times take place in the shadow. The great agreements and resonant break or

¹¹ Freud, S.; Ferenczi. *Correspondencia completa*, Sintesis, Madrid, 2001, p.123.

¹² Donn, J. *Freud y Jung...* Op. cit., p.210.

war declarations are often preceded by a series of interchanges, negotiations and collapses made behind people's back. Behaviour exposition, the field of discourse, treaties elaboration and laws are only the tip of the "iceberg" that remains submerged. Then, we should not trust what is explained, what is said, what is exposed if we do not have the restricted, secret, obscure information that lies behind; because it can cause a sudden overturning in what is intended to be presented to public exposition or more selected audiences. The paradox lies in that the secret needs to be known in order to know, and at the same time the secret is considered as such precisely because it is unknown. For to inquire into the secret is to destroy it.

These considerations allow to sustain that the different organizational and institutional leaderships hold more power than they show; for they handle the most exclusive and relevant secret, the one that corresponds to the decisions of greatest magnitude. As we descend in the scale of decision-taking power, parallelly we descend in the handling of less important secrets, until we reach the citizen or plain public for whom the secret is only a suspicion, an intrigue and a distrust which cannot be find out. Then, it is possible to establish a segmented scale between the levels of secret that are handled by leaders and the ones being lead. At the top, there are the high leaderships that dominate secret and exposition, and that discriminate, moreover, what should be known through the descending scale. Down the scale, the exposition increases and the knowledge of the secret decreases. This is one dimension of manipulation. "At the top", what needs to be done, said and concealed is elaborated. The secret of great decisions is truly elitist. It states that there are only a few that can know the "kitchen" of power. And this is not only a question of knowledge, but also one of capacity to endure and resist disappointments and disillusionments, the merciless features of the battle. If there is something that characterises an elite, it is the monopoly of the secret of the great decisions, i.e. the secret of everything that had to be done to reach them. The ones descending in the scale are allowed -from top to bottom- a certain dose of the secret until mere suspicion without evidence is reached.

Foucault discovers the role of the secret when he criticizes power conceptions based on the Law, the Sobereign and the State, i.e. the great place where it would presumably reside. He also points out that the secret is a constitutive part of power. In his work "The willingness to know", first volume of his *History of sexuality*, he says:

“(...) power is only bearable provided that it masks a big part of itself. His success is directly proportionate with what it can conceal from its mechanisms”.¹³

And he adds:

“To power, the secret does not belong to the order of abuse; it is indispensable for it to work”.¹⁴

It is an acceptability regime because without it, power would spill all its productive, strategic and positive wealth. And Foucault states that the complex, complicated and paradoxical game of force and strategies becomes acceptable -specially for whom it submits- when it is reduced to regulation, order and arbitration instances concealing everything else.¹⁵

We agree with Foucault in that power becomes more acceptable and bearable when it keeps secret a series of reprehensible activities. However, we note that power comprises more extense and diversified dimensions. Secret strategies are part of the power strategies. The shadow zone of secrets enables highly sophisticated and qualified operations to be performed. Consequently, there are secrets in all the levels of the descending scale, though they vary in importance and significance.

The secret cultivated in every level of the decisional scale has the charm that certain or much impunity and certain or much effectiveness grants. In the politic field, the strategies of the secret seek to achieve goals more rapidly and forcefully, with fewer risks. The secret avoids, among other things, being exposed. And that is specially useful when expositons increase the danger of frustating the actions and projects in the presence of the possible reaction of the directly involved rivals or major collective groups. When the strategies are exposed, uncertainty increases, because the involved social field is shaken and the defects and vulnerability points of the project are shown. The strategies of the secret, the part that always goes together with the power strategies in any of the social levels in which it intervenes and that sometimes is the main part, know that coming to light opens doors to criticism, opposition, corrosion and destruction. And they also know that the shadow covers with a blanket of invisibility what is done or intended to be done. Moreover, the shadow avoids confrontation with the tastes and perceptions of the different layers of society. The leaders themselves, who have weight and power, and are necesarilly obliged to exposition –since it is there where their enchantment resides-,

¹³ Foucault, M., *Historia de la sexualidad*, vol. I, Madrid, Siglo XXI, 1996, p.105.

¹⁴ Ibidem.

¹⁵ Idem, p.99-111.

appeal, however, to the most clinic and pitiless practices of the secret to gain spaces and elude little edifying samples.

The politics secret art lies in regulating the dose of exposition and secret that should be employed. The clue lies in showing and concealing what is known, what is said, what is silenced and what is done and what is not done, according to the needs and demands of the changing situations. The secret grows as adverse, antagonic and unfavourable answers are expected in the light of the expositions. The art of handling secrets lies in being able to distinguish between a behaviour that requires clandestinity and one that requires exposure. Then, a series of hypothesis can be inferred in relation to this. The first one tells us that power strategies could be composed of instances of secret and instances of exposition, in the required proportions. The second one tells us that those proportionate articulations try to control the happenings as good as possible, and to undergo as little control from the outside as possible. The third one sustains that there is a strong association between the secret and the utilization of behaviour opposed to moral codes. That is to say, there is a strong correlation between the dark zones and the manipulating and merciles activities. It is not by chance that Bobbio points out the contradiction between the democratic principles of visibility and the invisibility of power.

The State is a group of institutions and strategies that paradigmatically offers the double instance of exposition and secret. The State shows, flaunts, disguises and conceals in different proportions depending on its class, regime, politic system and government. The so called State of Rights probably offers greater exposition from its organizations and behaviour, and major control over secret in general and over the organisms of the secret in particular. However, even in such cases, the practices of secret of the relevant organisms and of the bureaucracy and the political class sector, are still important and, in many cases decisive. The State has its own bureaucracies ("representative" and "career", according to Panebianco) that cultivate the secret as a source of power. And this raises serious problems with the democracy, citizenship and more equalitarian power distribution ideals.

Bobbio seems to have a power conception somehow juridical and critical at the same time. That is what makes him suspicious of power –which is positive- and reductionist –which is negative. He sustains that the power has a natural tendency to conceal and mask itself, and to lie to hide its intentions. He states that the power tries to sustract itself from indiscreet looks and become itself inaccessible. This is opposed to the principle of visibility, which has a revolutionary way before these concealments -being this

related to democracy, since one of its features is the publicity of governmental acts. The basis of this demand lies in that the public acts are visible, they can be judged and, consequently, allow citizens control over governors.

Bobbio sustains that power natural tendency is to hide, to withdraw from the strange look, not to declare publicly its intentions or do it in an untruthful way. He says:

“Same as God, the powerful tends to become inaccessible (...)”¹⁶

This author insists that power resists every attempt from its victim to show it, to bring it to light, take out the mask and tell the truth.

And he grabs hold of two habitual arguments to justify his negative and rejection to transparency: a) State affairs are way too complex for the lays to understand, and b) we do not have to let the enemy know our intentions. Then, the addressees of these government maxims are the subjects and other States.¹⁷

Undoubtedly, in the same way that he talks about a (revolutionary) visibility principle characteristic of democracies, Bobbio also confirms a kind of power invisibility principle. This comprises conflict and tension between both principles and, consequently, between democracy and power. We do not share Bobbio’s maniqueism in connection with this social relation, since we consider that there are both, a concealed power and a transparent one, an authoritarian and a dictatorial as well as a democratic one; however, we think that these reflections on power concealment are a fundamental contribution to the studies about the secret.

Bobbio quotes his texts *La democrazia e il potere invisibile* (1980) and his preface to *La strage. L’atto di accusa dei giudice di Bologna*.¹⁸ He also quotes M. Brutti’s work “Democracia y poder invisible”¹⁹ and the essay “Democracia y secreto”.²⁰ He also mentions Elías Canetti’s works on the secret as power essence, an specialized issue dealt in the essay *Masa y Poder*. Canetti says:

“The power retainer knows the others’ intentions, but he doesn’t want his own to be known. He must be extremely reserved: nobody can know what he thinks, what he plans to do.”²¹

¹⁶ Bobbio, N. *Democracia y sistema internacional*, en *Revista de Filosofía Política*, nº4, Madrid, nov. 1994, p.20.

¹⁷ Idem, pp.20-21.

¹⁸ Bobbio, N., *La strage...*, Editori Reuniti, Roma, 1986, pp.IX-XX.

¹⁹ Brutti, M., *Democracia...*, en *Rinascita*, XLII, nº33, 7 de sept. De 1985.

²⁰ Brutti, M. *Democracia y secreto*, en *El tratado secreto*, Actas del Convenio de Estudios, Sassari y Alghero (24-26 de marzo de 1988), Dir.: Paolo Fuis, Padua, Cedam, 1990, pp. 16-31.

²¹ Canetti, E., *Massa e potere*, Adelphim, Milán, 1981, p.353.

Max Weber tangentially talked about the issue of secret, especially when he analyzed the role of bureaucracies in his concepts of “domination sociology” and “State sociology”. It called Weber’s attention the increase of power that bureaucracies reached by means of utilizing the “occupational secret” (also called “professional secret” in a wider sense). This secret was not only a manifestation of a specific knowledge but also the exploitation of its exclusive use and a way of evading external criticism and controls. He literally says:

“Every bureaucracy endeavors to increase the superiority of professional knowledge by means of the *secret* of its knowledge and intentions. The bureaucratic government is, due to its own tendency, a government that excludes publicity. Bureaucracy conceals, as much as possible, its knowledge and its activities before criticism”.²²

In reference to domination, he sustains:

“Every domination that strives for continuity is, to certain extent, a secret domination”.²³ In his analysis of “State sociology”, Weber talks of the superior steps of bureaucracy, of diplomacy, of the military and religious organization, of the market power, of the enterprises and monopolies, and of the uses that these distinguished professions make of the secret to evade public exposition and, consequently, the possible controls. Thus, he says:

“The major strength of bureaucracy consists in the conversion, through “professional secret”, of service knowledge in a secret knowledge, that is to say, in a means to protect the administration against controls”.²⁴

In spite of these remarks, Weber did not develop the possibilities that the concept of secret enclosed for theory, empiric investigation and, specially, the studies on power and domination. These contributions are scattered in isolated points in his work.

In many opportunities, secret has covered up human-rights violations. Violence use, molestation and extermination against different social layers have been benefited from clandestinity. The States, especially when they have been occupied by those who handle violence technologies (militarists, irregular armies, guerrillas, and groups from other origins), have developed in different times and historic places, authoritarian, totalitarian and dictatorial actions over the population, sometimes –unluckily- with significant consensus. And they have used different forms of violent coercion under the

²² Weber, M., *Economía y Sociedad*, F.C.E., Milán, 1980, p.744.

²³ Idem, p.704.

²⁴ Idem, p.1000.

shelter of the secret –in many cases the so-called “State secret”. That is to say, they have tried to legitimate every kind of extra-limitations alleging to the State and Nation order and security defense. There is no doubt that these actions were sustained on “social imaginaries” that justified, and even vindicated and made an apology of these violent and repressive doings.

In times of severe social conflicts and before possible menaces of subversive powers, the armies of different countries were protagonists of numerous political interventions from the State. In some cases, personal, leadership and power ambition prevailed. In some others, what prevailed was the feeling that they were before the abyss and that the last resource was to appeal to the only institution with power of its own and enough rewards gained in the past. Whatever the reasons, the military-governmental power could command the politic decisions and achieve a military victory. In all these enterprises there has been use and abuse of the secret as an efficient and protective instance. Nevertheless, besides and accompanying the victory, all the barriers of human coexistence and its respective rights have been broken down. To a great extent, secret has covered the use of threatens, arrogance, fear, violence and death. It is as if it would feed the imaginary with Salvationist values and demonization of the adversary/enemy, and enjoyed from absolute arrogance and impunity.

In the cases we are referring to, the secret State became a kidnapping, molestation and extermination criminal machine that worked in the most menacing clandestinity. Still, in spite of the investigations and elapsed time, a secret atmosphere covers a great part of these episodes and the destiny given to our dead and disappeared ones. The ones responsible for such facts seem to feel no culpability or remorse, but rather they feel persecuted by the secret shadow of the defeated and they believe themselves the expiatory victims, lacerated martyrs of a little less than diabolic revenge. Doubtless, the secret accompanied these abominable stories and showed its worst face.

Communication and secret

Communication and information appear as the favorite instances of exposition and light. The informative and communicative discourses apparently constitute the desideratum of what is showed, what is brought to everybody's sight or, at least, to the ones capable of “reading” what is said. Discourse analysis makes use of proceedings that allow to reveal a series of concealments, but always from the available corpus. That is,

doubtless, a very important step to move ahead in the unmasking of the intentions, aims and even desires that are unconsciously immerse in the discourses. However, these analyses are slaves of the material they have: they cannot work without it and they are constrained to dis-arm and construct only from its remains. As it has already been said before, these are very important, but they are not enough. Because the secret is not only concealed in the corpus, but under it too and, also, in some other places and secret corpus.

According to what has been said, three communication-information levels can be established in connection to the secret. These are:

Explicit communication-information. This level comprises the following sub-categories: massive/selective/segmented.

Secret communication-information. It can comprise restriction/exclusion circles.

Here we establish a first hypothesis that poses: every communication-information constitutes a continuum whose extremes are “explicit” and “secret”. This hypothesis makes the corpus and the discursive analysis explanatory power relative, but specially the clarity and the distinction of the communication relations. A second hypothesis derives from the previous one; it affirms that every communication-information works *in* and *over* combined underground circuits of secrets.

Habermas, for example, ignored the value of the secret and clandestinity. Even if he analyzed complex communication instances, he turns his theory into a kind of apology of exposition, either free or dominated, scientific or alienated. In his *Teoría de la acción comunicativa*²⁵ he establishes a differentiation between the conceptions that sustain that the society is a system and/or a world of life, and he tries to defy them. The critical theory that he develops tries to incorporate both conceptions and give them a new turn towards his proposal. The communicative action is differentiated from the strategic and instrumental actions, according to his remarks, because they keep the reason oriented towards the understanding, to the inter-subjectively valid agreement and to the domination-free communication. Thus he exposes:

“An agreement reached communicatively must have a rational basis; that is to say, it cannot come imposed by any of the parties, neither instrumentally, at the mercy of a direct intervention from action into the situation, nor strategically, by means of a calculated influx of an opponent’s decisions.”²⁶

²⁵ Habermas, J., *Teoría de la acción comunicativa*, Taurus, Madrid, 1988, 4 vols.

²⁶ Idem, p. 368, vol. I.

Habermas criticizes the death of the transcendental and rational subject in the hands of Luhmann's²⁷ social system and of the existential magma of the "worlds of life" of the last Husserl, and of Schutz²⁸, Berger and Luckman²⁹ focuses. He makes an interesting symbiosis between both paradigms –in a critical version- as it is inferred from Frankfurt's tradition. In the communicative action, subject, reason and intercommunicative competence must act. Thus he says:

"(...) the content of a consensus is not as important as the formal conditions of the reaching of that consensus".³⁰

All these lead the Frankfurter philosopher to develop a social theory that intends to rescue "modernism" possibilities to give shape to his unfinished project. Regrettably, we did not find anything in his works related to the secret and clandestine actions and to the incorporation of the secret to the discursive practices.

Van Dijk³¹ says that one of the most astonishing advances in the studies of discourse is the critical and sociopolitical analysis of written texts and speech. However, one wonders what happens with secret and ciphered texts and with concealed speech. And one also wonders about what happens with obstacles, stratagems and traps elaborated so that all this remains this way, concealed and secret. Moreover, one would like to know which could be the methodological and theoretical mechanisms that enable approximations to the backstage and to what is "behind". In the same interpretative line, Irene Vasilachis says:

"(...) language is, at the same time, a resource and a creation, a way of production but also a way of social reproduction. Similarly, we understand that the communicative and social context in which speech is produced, determines the meaning and the scope of the utterances, their production and the content of the interpretations".³²

Within this communicative and social context and that creative and reproductive written or spoken production is supported on secret and dense plots –difficult or impossible to know, or at least record. Linguistic products socio-communicative contexts are, many times, the manipulated covering of deaf and complicated fights, negotiations and underground agreements. Actually, in many cases they should work as ciphered

²⁷ Luhmann, N., *Sociedad y sistema: ambición de la teoría*, Paidós, Barcelona.

²⁸ Schutz, A., *El problema de la realidad social*, Amorrortu, Buenos Aires.

²⁹ Berger, P. y Luckman, T., *La construcción social de la realidad*, Amorrortu, Buenos Aires, 1995..

³⁰ Habermas, J., *La lógica de las ciencias sociales*, Tecnos, Madrid, 1990, p.454.

³¹ Van Dijk, T.A., *Estructuras y funciones del discurso*, Siglo XXI, México, 1991.

³² Vasilachis, I., *Discurso político y prensa escrita*, Gedisa, Barcelona, 1997, p.214.

indicators of what is actually going on, complementing the -foreseen or unforeseen-events, impacts and results deep analysis of the social events.

Then, every communication-information is at the same time showing, deviating and concealing what could be known. Communication theories should pay more attention to the underlying manipulation mechanisms of every social communicative process. Politicians, mass media and every communicative media share, in different degrees, this paradoxical and complex situation. That is to say, in each and every activity of the networks and information recipients something is communicated, distorted, measured, manipulated and concealed.

Conclusion

This work is inscribed in the development of a future *secret and power sociology or sociopolitics*. We have seen so far just some aspects of this amazing phenomenon of general concealment. Secret is everywhere and it is an indispensable part of people and communities' life. In some places, times and developments, secret seems to gain new strengths and to try to occupy major state, social and personal spaces. It appears under ways that vary from the most recondite murmur up to the most cryptic messages and the most sophisticated technologies. But it is always constituted in a paradoxical movement that conceals its own concealment. Thus, it constitutes the secret of the secret and the power of the secret. Within social disciplines we do not find anything that makes reference to this; at the most, there appear brief allusive digressions. It is somehow inexplicable given its extraordinary importance, in spite of the efforts of secret life to remain in the shadows. It is as if the secret represented an unavowable value, unworthy of being presented in everyday discourses and in scientific discourses. It is as if it would be consigned to the marginal inquirers of uncommendable pustules. It is time to lift the veil that darkens the second veil; it is time to investigate the enormous, diverse and prolific field of secret. To be able to know, show, unmask, control, and even to achieve a freer and most transparent quality of life.